

Legislation Includes Funding for High-Speed Rail Development In America

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 6003, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, legislation to authorize appropriations for Amtrak for fiscal years 2009 to 2013. The bill also authorizes \$1.75 billion in grants over the next five years to states and/or Amtrak to finance the construction and equipment for high-speed rail.

Amtrak's authorization expired in December 2002, and was not reauthorized during the last three Congresses. As the nation's only provider of intercity passenger rail service, the lack of funding caused the system to suffer. This reauthorization creates a new capital grants program for states to provide new or improved intercity passenger rail. Amtrak reauthorization passed the United States Senate last November. It is expected the House and Senate will soon begin a conference on both bills in the near future. Once an agreement is reached, both chambers will vote on the agreed bill before sending it to the White House for signature

"California has the highest Amtrak usage of any state in our nation, and I know that we will see the benefits once this bill is signed into law," said Costa. "This bill is a great first step for the federal government to finance the development and construction of high-speed rail. It should be clear to everyone that we are in a world-wide energy crisis and cheap gasoline is a thing of the past; thus, the need to create a true inter-modal, interconnected, 21st century system of transportation with high speed rail as an integral part."

One key section authorizes \$1.75 billion grant funding for the 11 high-speed rail corridors in the nation. States and/or Amtrak will be allowed to finance the construction and equipment needed for high-speed rail. The federal share of the grants is up to 80 percent, and the Department of Transportation will award the grants on a competitive basis using economic performance, expected ridership and other factors as criteria.

"Our friends in Europe and Japan over the past four decades have had great successes with their high-speed rail systems, and both combined will soon have over 10,000 miles of high-speed rail connecting all of the major metropolitan areas," added Costa. "A high-speed rail network throughout our nation will be not only an economic boon, but a real shot-in-the-arm for our transportation system as a whole."

